IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

First Named Inventor:	SCHLÜTER, DIETRICH M.		
Application No.:	10/500,617	Confirmation No.:	4341
Filed:	January 17, 2003		
Title:	TERMINAL BLOCK AND WIRE DISTRIBUTOR INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE TERMINAL BLOCK		

PRE-APPEAL BRIEF REQUEST FOR REVIEW

Mail Stop AF
Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Dear Commissioner:

Applicants hereby request a Panel Review of the final rejection dated April 10, 2006 in the above-identified application. This Request is being filed concurrently with a Notice of Appeal Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 41.31(a). No amendments accompany the Request.

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-10 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1-4 and 7-10 stand finally rejected in the Examiner's April 10, 2006 Office Action. Claims 5, 6 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim but are indicated as containing allowable subject matter.

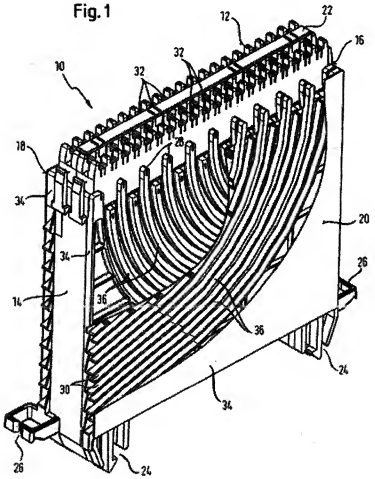
Reasons for the Request

Claims 1-4 and 7-10 stand finally rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by the disclosure of German Patent DE 2,048,144 (the "Steiner Reference").[1] Applicants disagree that the Steiner Reference teaches or suggests the subject matter of the rejected claims. Applicants

believe the Examiner has fundamentally misinterpreted the Steiner Reference and has failed to adequately consider the arguments submitted by Applicants in their Response of January 20, 2006.

The rejected claims relate to a telecommunications block. In relevant respects, the blocks comprise two ***adjoining*** arrays of wire guides that lead to opposite side of the block and are associated with the same row of contacts. This arrangement is illustrated in Figure 1 of the present application:

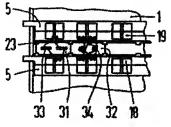
Fig. 1



[1] The Steiner reference is published in German. Applicants cited the Steiner reference in an Information Disclosure Statement filed on June 29, 2004 together with an English language abstract. Applicants provided a full English language translation of the reference to the Examiner with their January 20, 2006 Response.

Telecommunications blocks of the prior art generally have two ***non-adjoining*** arrays of wire guides, positioned on opposite sides of a row of contacts, thereby forming a sandwich-like construction. This very type of non-adjoining construction is the construction disclosed in the Steiner reference at Figure 3 (the allegedly anticipatory disclosure cited by the Examiner):

Fig. 3



The description accompanying Figure 3 of the Steiner reference associates wire guides (18) and (19) with components (31) and (32), consistent with clear depiction of the wires in the drawing. (See English Translation at page 7). As is clearly evident, the wire guides associated with the row of contacts in Figure 3 are not configured in adjoining arrays. Stated differently, the two arrays associated with the components (*i.e.*, the row of contacts) do not adjoin ***both*** each other and at least one row of contacts as required by the rejected claims.

The present application, moreover, claims priority to International Patent Application No. PCT/EP03/00461. The present application was filed with the USPTO under 35 U.S.C. § 371 after a preliminary international examination, the proceedings of which were provided to the USPTO upon filing. The Steiner reference was cited during international examination (as reference D3) and was distinguished on the same grounds as Applicants have argued to the Examiner. The International Preliminary Examination Report indicated the general allowability of the present claims.

The present application also describes, in detail, the advantages of the claimed telecommunications block design:

> "For the terminal block the flexibility of guiding the cable conductors in this way is substantially enhanced by assigning a single row of contacts to an array of wire guides which lead to different sides of the terminal block. This enables cable conductors terminated at contacts of a single row of contacts to be guided to any

side of the terminal block and this provides novel flexibility to the user without sacrificing the ability to maintain a certain order in routing of cable conductors from the terminal block. Hitherto it was conventionally the case, that a certain row of contacts had to be assigned to a particular side of a terminal block. At this side the further run of the cable conductors, as cited above, was defined, for example, downwards or upwards by the defined architecture of the wire distributor. Accordingly, it was hitherto the case that certain rows of contacts could only be used for a certain function, for example, for terminating cable conductors at the subscribers. Other rows of contacts could only be used for terminating cross-connect or backbone cables due to the traditionally defined routing directions of bundled cable conductors.

It is now possible to bring out cable conductors terminated at a particular row of contacts to either side of the terminal block. At the left-hand side and right-hand side of the terminal block the directions for routing the cable conductors are defined, namely upwards or downwards. The invention thus provides added flexibility as to whether a terminated cable conductor can be further routed upwards or to the side at which it is routed further downwards. In particular, the side, to which a terminated cable conductor can be guided, is independent from the contact row, at which it is terminated. By means of the invention, the terminated cable conductor can flexibly be guided towards either side. In this manner it is possible to continue the guiding of the terminated cable conductor along side the terminal block in the upwards or downwards direction without harming the uncluttered arrangement of the cable conductors. The novel terminal block accordingly makes it possible to use the rows of contacts with added flexibility." (Specification at pages 8-9).

The Examiner's final rejection fails to acknowledge the clear differences between the rejected claims and the Steiner reference and the advantages those differences provide. For reasons that Applicants have pointed out in their Response, and as acknowledged in the International Preliminary Examination Report, the rejected claims are neither anticipated nor rendered obvious over the disclosure of the Steiner reference. For at least this reason, Applicants request review and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-4 and 7-10 over the Steiner reference.

Summary

Applicants respectfully request that the Panel review and reverse the final rejections of claims 1-4 and 7-10 of the pending application, and that a Panel Decision be issued allowing the application on the existing claims.

Respectfully submitted,

July 10, 2006
Date

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